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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSUL 000010

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SUBJECT: NINEWA IECI DIRECTOR CLAIMS EVIDENCE OF MISSING VOTERS COULD HAVE CHANGED ELECTION OUTCOME

REF: MOSUL 210

CLASSIFIED BY: Cameron Munter, PRT Leader, Provincial Reconstruction Team Ninewa, State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) REO Poloff met with Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) Ninewa Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) director Oday Abed at his headquarters office at the PJCC on February 6. Abed claims an internal study he is conducting has revealed that over 4,000 families (potentially 15,000 to 19,000 voters) were "left off" of the voter registry list, or "List 91." Abed believes this number, while not yet verified, would have "changed the outcome" of the election had these voters been able to participate. Abed faulted central IECI for the error and speculated on potential corruption in the ranks of the headquarters office, which he also believes might have been the impetus for his suspension on the eve of the election. Abed said he has already sent a letter informing central IECI of his findings, and that he would submit the final results of his study in the next few weeks. He said he would not "go public" with the information for fear of reprisal. End Summary.

"MISSING VOTERS"

2. (C) Reflecting on the national election of December 15, Abed claims there were serious errors with the "List 91" voter registry. Abed said he decided to conduct a study of the list since there were many cases of voters who did not appear on voter lists at several sites throughout the province (reftel). Abed claims 4,335 families, or 15,000 to 19,000 potential voters, were "missing" from the voter list. Although he declined to say exactly which District Electoral Offices (DEOs) might have been affected, Abed believes that if his findings ring true they could have "changed the outcome" of the election in Ninewa.

3. (C) Abed said he conducted his study by sampling random DEOs and working with DEO managers and food agents (polling sites were linked to food ration agent locations) to get to the root of the problem. Although Abed admits more work needs to be done before he can release his results, he is adamant about the number of missing voters he has discovered so far. Abed said he wrote to central IECI in Baghdad about the issue, and is going to write another letter soon with the final results of his study with the hope that any glitches in the list could be corrected for the next election. Abed said the problem never surfaced during the United Nations and IECI audit days after the election, since that only focused on ballot boxes. He does not believe the UN ever knew about the problem.

SUSPENDED WITHOUT REASON

4. (C) Abed said he is still confused why he was put on administrative leave early the morning of the election (reftel). Abed said he "never received any answer" from central IECI why it happened. He still believes the reason for his suspension was related to accusations of collaborating with political parties, which Abed said were leveled against "almost all GEOs" in the country. More confusing for Abed, however, is that he claims he has "no idea" why he was allowed to return to his position after the election. Regardless, Abed is confident that if an investigation were conducted he would be exonerated.

IECI CORRUPTION?

5. (C) Abed said he believes corruption in central IECI contributed to his being ousted temporarily, but said he could not supply us with specific information to back his claim. He said he would do so in the future when he departs from post. Abed cited events that occurred before the election, however, as

evidence of his doubts about the integrity of the IECI. He claims IECI "ordered" him to create special polling sites for Iraqi Army (IA) units for early voting on December 12 and for all voting on December 15. Abed said he refused to accommodate this request because he perceived it as an attempt to appease the Kurds, who make up the majority of IA soldiers in northern Iraq. Abed said he received a list of 19,000 names from the military for early voting but that 23,000 showed up to vote (reftel). Abed said he believes the extra 4,000 voters were "bused in" by Kurdish political parties. He said he realizes these voters could only vote on the national ballot, but said he "would not support" such an order either way. He is confident this event contributed to his being suspended on election day.

COMMENT

16. (C) We note that Abed has had a tendency to exaggerate on certain points, most recently on the day before the election where he was having a war of words with IA 3rd Division commander General Khorsheed. However, regarding his claim that there were a large number of voters whose names were "missing" on voter registry lists seems consistent with feedback we received from several other sources, including election observers, polling site managers, and political party officials. Abed seemed very serious about this problem and claims he has even thought of "going public," telling his story to the press. Unfortunately, Abed said he has no confidence that his revelations would change anything, and believes that such a move would only put him and his family at risk.

MUNTER